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BRIEF OF THE  
TOWN OF LOUISBOURG

TO

THE RAND ROYAL COMMISSION ON COAL

MARCH 1960







Ex 13

Mr. Justice Rand: The Town of Louisbourg is grateful for this opportunity to submit a brief on the vitally important subject before you. We are aware, however, that the larger aspects of the coal industry and its problems have been well covered in the various briefs that have been presented heretofore and, in order to avoid a profitless duplication of material, this submission will be confined to the particular involvement of the Town of Louisbourg with that industry and a few general comments.

There are no coal mines in the immediate vicinity of Louisbourg, but it is an open port and Dosco maintains coal and steel shipping piers there for winter operations. It is also the terminus of the Sydney and Louisbourg Railway which exists primarily for the accommodation of Dosco shipping activity. The population of the Town is approximately Thirteen Hundred, and about One Hundred residents with between Two Hundred and Two Hundred Fifty dependents are directly employed by the Dosco complex either as coal trimmers and shippers or as railwaymen. These may seem rather pathetic statistics in view of some of the figures that have been submitted during these hearings but we would like to point out that we are here concerned with one complete community which is affected by the difficulties of the coal industry in the same manner as other towns in the area. Approximately Twenty per cent of the people of Louisbourg are directly dependent upon coal. Merchants, suppliers and those providing services in the Town are in turn indirectly dependent upon this Twenty per cent portion of the population and upon the trade derived from coal-hauling vessels that visit the port. In the outlying districts, many people who deal in Louisbourg are engaged in cutting pit props used in our coal mines. Any sharp dislocation or disruption in the coal industry would have a







profoundly detrimental effect upon Louisbourg.

According to press reports, the brief presented by the Province of Nova Scotia stated that: "There has been an extensive fisheries development in the Town (of Louisbourg) since the war". It is true that Gorton-Pew Company Limited and National Sea Products Limited, in an interlocking operation erected sizable fish processing plants in the Town approximately ten years ago. But we feel we should point out that the circumstances which have caused the closing of similar operations in other parts of Nova Scotia and in Newfoundland have brought about the withdrawal of Gorton-Pew Company Limited from Louisbourg. National Sea Products Limited now carries on a reduced operation at the original site but the situation is so uncertain that the Town has been obliged to grant tax concessions to the remaining Company. There is now a Bill before the Provincial Legislature fixing for a ten year period a reduced assessment on the assets of National Sea Products Limited. These unhappy developments increase the significance of the coal industry for the community and the possibility of any shrinkage in that quarter is viewed by the population with alarm.

If the shipping of coal from Louisbourg is discontinued, it is probable that the Sydney and Louisbourg Railway will cease to function. Representatives of National Sea Products Limited have indicated that this railway service is vital to their enterprise and its discontinuance would have a very serious effect upon their operations. This is one more illustration of the way in which the coal industry is woven into the entire economy of this area.

We wish to suggest that the possibilities of expanding the water-borne shipment of coal be investigated, it being our concern that Louisbourg shall continue to serve as a winter port for the industrial area of Cape Breton. There can be no doubt that the existence of Port facilities influenced the location of fish processing plants in Louisbourg







and as long as these facilities are maintained the Town has some hope of future development.

We do not wish to impose on you by repeating the constructive recommendations that have been outlined in other briefs. We feel, however, that it is in order for us to underline the basic position of this area on the question of whether or not measures should be taken by the central government to assist the coal industry out of its present difficulties. As taxpayers we have contributed to the measures that have been taken to support other Canadian industries. As Canadians we have been involved with the rest of the nation in the large scale promotion of the very fuels which now threaten our coal industry. In the national interest we endure a tariff structure that makes us virtually a captive market for central Canadian manufacturers. All of this is acceptable to us for with other Canadians we share the dream of a great nation and, in order to remain Canadians, we are willing to suffer the disadvantages of our political geography. We realize that, in a country as artificially constituted as this, unnatural and costly measures of economic intervention are sometimes required on the part of the central government to offset our peculiar geographical problems. But we in this area want to become participators in the great Canadian enterprise and we feel we are entitled to economic intervention equivalent to that which has been extended to other phases of the national economy. We believe that such intervention is urgently required in this area, and we believe and insist that our difficulties are no longer purely geographical but have been aggravated by the artificial measures that have been taken to assist other areas. To state our position briefly, we feel we should be granted assistance that will enable us to bring our products to available Canadian markets on a preferential basis in the same manner that other Canadian products are brought to us.

We in the Maritimes have often deserved the judgment that we are too fond of grumbling about historical wrongs. But tempting and easy as it may be to exhume our







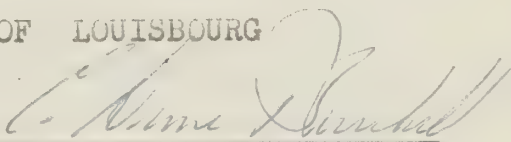
ancient complaints, that is no longer our preoccupation. We are concerned with our problems as they exist today and we are making strenuous efforts to discover solutions. Unfortunately we cannot find them alone. Mr. Leslie Roberts writing in the January 1960 edition of The Atlantic Advocate puts it this way: "The only Canadian answer to the Atlantic problem is Federal action which will give the people of the region an opportunity to establish economic equality with central Canada through their own efforts. This action must provide the facilities for self-development on the one hand, and insure the maintenance of existing vital industries, at least through a long transition period, on the other. The opportunity to attain economic parity does not now exist."

As one of the communities that stands to suffer great loss if the coal industry is permitted to shrink and wither, we endorse the constructive recommendations that have been made before you and earnestly request that all of the proposed solutions be carefully considered in the national interest as well as in the interest of those ~~of whom~~ who are directly concerned.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

TOWN OF LOUISBOURG

Per:

  
C. DENNE BURCHELL  
Town Solicitor







*Dated*

*A.D. 19*

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